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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8595
INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE
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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC//JF/UNMA//
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC//J3//
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RHMFIUU/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUMICEA/JICCENT MACDILL AFB FL
RHMFIUU/COMSOCCENT MACDILL AFB FL
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2286
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 2493
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 5621
RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA 1127

UNCLAS KABUL 000875

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STATE FOR SA/FO, SA/A, SA/PAB, S/CT, EUR/RPM,
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STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG
NSC FOR AHARRIMAN, KAMEND
CENTCOM FOR CG CFC-A, CG CJTF-76, POLAD
REL NATO/AUST/NZ/ISAF

E.O. 12958 N/A
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [PTER](#) [AF](#)
SUBJECT: PRT/LASHKAR GAH - CITIZENS SEE BOOTS ON THE
GROUND

¶1. (SBU) As the PRT continues its transition to the UK, an advance group of British soldiers has begun dismounted patrols in Helmand Province's capital, Lashkar Gah. Early indications appear positive. Up to the arrival of the UK troops, there have been no such patrols, as US forces use mounted patrols as their standard operating procedure.

¶2. (SBU) UK officers view dismounted patrols as a key component to improving security in the area. According to the officers, when citizens see soldiers on foot and interacting with local merchants and inhabitants, it mitigates risk and should lead to better overall knowledge of the area of operations. They said that dismounted patrols will be a regular feature of the UK deployment.

¶3. (SBU) PRT poloff accompanied a UK dismounted patrol on February 14. Despite language barriers, soldiers interacted comfortably with local people. Young people, especially, were very anxious to interact with the troops and try out their English. Several teenagers spoke English fairly well. PRToff and soldiers exchanged greetings with numerous shopkeepers and others encountered along the route. Quite a few young people asked to have their photos taken.

¶4. (SBU) Several citizens said that they were happy to see the UK troops. Some told us that they had heard reports on local radio and television that there would be 3,000 troops eventually deployed in

the province. As we have heard in many other fora, security is a major concern of most citizens. Soldiers, quite a few of whom are veterans of other stability operations, said that they also enjoyed interacting with local citizens. A couple of times, the soldiers helped out citizens - in one case, righting a load that had fallen off a bicycle.

15. (SBU) COMMENT: Based on the first few patrols, dismounted patrols appear to be a positive development in facilitating relations between the Coalition and local people. A foot patrol through town is likely to make citizens feel more secure and foster improved familiarity between the Coalition and the people. END COMMENT.

NEUMANN